FEBRUARY 1981

ROXIE CINEMA
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ROXIE

FEBRUARY 20–21

THE FILMS OF CURT McDOWELL

The Roxie is proud to present the theatrical premiere of Curt McDowell's new short film *Loads* (following its world premiere at the Pasadena Film Forum on November 17 and 19, 1980, and its San Francisco premiere at the Cinematheque on February 12). We present his new film as the summit of a short chronology of his work, including *A Visit to Indiana* (1970), *Confessions* (1971), *Pornogra Follies* (1970), *Fly Me to the Moon* (1974), and the feature film *Thundercrack!* (1975). McDowell's tongue-in-cheek style, although witty, compassionate, and ironic, is also sexually explicit and not for the erotically squeamish. Regretfully, viewing for these performances is restricted to adults.

Loads was filmed in 1976 and edited in 1980. The following review was written at the time of its Pasadena premiere by Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner* writer David Ehrenstein:

San Francisco-based filmmaker Curt McDowell has always been a pioneer in sexual frankness, but his new film *Loads* goes far beyond his earlier all-out efforts and puts such big-time dabblers in eroticism as Bernardo Bertolucci and Nagisa Oshima decidedly in the shade.

Leaving, as the saying goes, nothing to the imagination, the film details McDowell's successful seductions of otherwise heterosexual men in a "Greatest Hits"/diary/big-game-trophy style. The film's real interest, however, revolves around the curiously elusive form that McDowell has given to his let-it-all-hang-out material. By a complex interweaving of individual sequences, and a halting narration that seems on the verge of explaining more than it intends, McDowell upsets accepted notions of both filmmaking intent and spectator access. The film may be explicit on one level, but on another it's very cagey, for McDowell systematically refuses to allow the viewer to position himself in relation to what's on the screen. We're voyeurs kept — to our discomforted surprise — at arm's length.

The easily offended are advised to avoid such sexcapades. But if homoerotic shenanigans don't faze you — *Loads* offers a unique experience.

Perhaps because of his sleazy local reputation, McDowell has not had the critical attention in San Francisco that he has had out of town. While garnering a large and loyal audience here for his erotic-absurdist short films and his feature film *Thundercrack!*, he has been paid scant attention by the local press.

Thundercrack! has just opened theatrically in New York and London after playing in theaters in San Francisco and Los Angeles and at film festivals in Seattle, London, and Rotterdam. In the London *Gay News*, Jack Babuscio wrote:

Thundercrack! is the hardest of hardcore pictures — the most sexually explicit movie I've ever viewed in Britain: solo, lesbian, heterosexual and mixed male couplings are viewed with a (remorseless) camera. This is, in short, a steamy spoof filmed with a sure and witty grasp of genre conventions whose prevailing mood is one of buoyancy and exhilaration. But it's also strenuously subversive in its eroticism. *Thundercrack!* is, simply, pro-sex — of *all* sorts: try it, you'll like it — that's its theme. When a straight guy is initiated to gay sex after being anally entered by a "switch hitter," the het tells the married woman with whom he's "eloping": "Now, if it doesn't work out with us, I can always start something with your husband." Beautiful!

The British Film Institute *Monthly Film Bulletin* (December 1980) calls *Thundercrack!* "a staple trash/underground/gay cult classic" which "undeniably has the conviction of its own tastelessness. Its parodies and burlesques have been taken up secondhand from the cheaper schlock and horror films — inversions of traditional sexuality, of traditional middle-American hospitality, and of the whole syntax of suburban interaction — and these are often hilariously handled."

We sum up with a quote from Jenny Shepherd in *Damage* magazine (October 1980):

What else can I say? Trash movies are the genre that Curt McDowell helped create, and which has allowed him to express himself, but his sensibility goes beyond trash. His movies have all the hallmarks of trash-sense of the ridiculous, emphasis on technical/set/costume crudity, deliberate undercutting of his own effects and parodying conventions — but his films compel you to see into his and your own feelings about the subjects that he exposes. He does an ax job on the patriarchal family with wit and feeling.

Loads and other short films of Curt McDowell and *Thundercrack!* will play at the Roxie on February 20 and 21.

20
21

THUNDER CRACK!

"*Thundercrack* starts out in *Old Dark House* style with a dark and stormy night, an assorted group of strangers stranded in a remote Victorian mansion, and a crazed hostess with her husband pickled in a jar and her monstrous son locked in the spare room. From there on, it is a series of test situations which manage to get everyone together, sexually and socially, with everyone else before dawn brings everything to a rousing conclusion." —J.R. Taylor, *Sight and Sound*. Directed by Curt McDowell. Script by George Kuchar. With Marion Eaton. 1975. X-rated.

FRI. 8:10 SAT. 4:15, 8:10

SHORT FILMS

Loads (1980)
A Visit To Indiana (1970)
Confessions (1971)
Pornogra Follies (1970)
Fly Me to the Moon (1974)

FRI. & SAT. 6:30, 10:25